

PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS (PPOL)

PPOL 503: Statistics for Public Policy I

3 Credits

This course provides a foundation for both evaluating and conducting quantitative analysis of public policy. The first third of the course examines foundational issues of conducting quantitative analysis of public policy. It does so by reviewing the basic elements of the foundations of such analysis, including the logic of scientific analysis, issues of philosophy of science, measurement theory (validity and reliability), and the elements of research design associated with internal and external validity as they apply to designs common in policy analysis. The remaining two-thirds of the course sequentially examines the use of basic statistical techniques in public policy analysis, including descriptive statistics (frequency distributions, measures of central tendency, and measures of dispersion), probability (the normal, binomial, poisson and other probability distributions), inferential statistics (hypothesis testing, estimating population proportions, and testing differences between two groups), and the analysis of nominal and ordinal data (constructing and analyzing simple and control contingency tables). The course provides a foundation for studying more advanced quantitative analysis techniques, such as regression analysis and related techniques. Throughout the course, the several statistical analysis techniques will be examined through their application to typical public policy problems. The goal of the course is to enable students to become familiar with the basic elements of quantitative analysis of public policy, to enable them to evaluate statistical evidence bearing on public policy decisions, and to conduct basic statistical analysis on public policy questions, all of which are essential for professional careers in public policy.

PPOL 506: Statistics for Public Policy II

3 Credits

This course prepares students for both evaluating and conducting quantitative analysis of public policy using regression and regression-like techniques of statistical analysis. It does so by reviewing the logic of simple and multiple regression and the inferences that can be drawn from such analysis about public policy questions. The course then reviews the detection of violations of the assumptions of the regression model (specification error, heteroskedasticity, serial correlation, collinearity, nonlinearity, nonadditivity, and measurement error), their implications for valid inference, and their correction using extensions of basic regression analysis. The course will also examine regression-like techniques for nominal and ordinal dependent variables and their statistical evaluation. Throughout the course, the several regression analysis techniques will be examined through their application to typical public policy problems. The goal of the course is to enable students to become familiar with the elements of quantitative analysis of public policy using regression analysis, to enable them to evaluate such evidence bearing on public policy decisions, and to conduct regression analysis on public policy questions, all of which are essential for professional careers in public policy.

Prerequisite: PPOL 503

PPOL 801: The Public Policy Process

3 Credits

The policy process refers to the development of public policy over time and the actors, events, and contexts surrounding this development. Trying to understand and explain the policy process requires an understanding of the relationships among an uncountable number of factors in a dynamic system with nested levels of interactions and uncertain inputs and outputs. This course decomposes this complexity by first considering the political conceptualization of public policy problems, the tools by which public policies – laws, regulations, and markets – are expressed, and the formal and informal actors (voters, legislators, executives, courts, bureaucracies, the media, and interest organizations) engaged in the policy process. The course then examines a number of broad models of the policy process as a whole, including the policy streams, institutional, incremental, advocacy coalition, and punctuated equilibrium models. The course also examines these actors and models at several stages of the policy process running from agenda setting, through policy formulation and adoption, to policy evaluation. The goal of the course is to enable students to identify the wide variety of actors in the policy process, understand the institutional contexts they operate in and the tools of policy influence they seek to employ at several distinct stages of the policy process, and critically assess the implications and empirical veracity of a variety of conceptual models of the policy process.

PPOL 802: Economic Analysis for Public Policy

3 Credits

Should the government directly regulate pollution or allow the market to determine levels of effluents? Should government pay farmers to reduce production of oversupplied crops, or is this an unfair government handout? Economists approach such questions using the basic microeconomic tools of their discipline. Understanding and being able to apply those tools is an essential part of the work of public policy analysts. This course, designed for students with little or no prior training in economics, gives students an overview of the tools and logic economists use in analyzing questions like those above, as well as many others. The focus will be on gaining a sound understanding and familiarity with the basic concepts and modes of analysis used in microeconomics so they can be applied to public policy questions. This includes first a basic overview of the behavior of consumers, firms, and labor markets, and based on this, the concepts of supply and demand, competition, and consumer and producer surplus. Students will learn how these influence the functioning of markets given that they may be imperfect, including problems of imperfect information, irrational behavior, and market failures associated with externalities and public goods. And third, this course will cover how these problems both play out in the demand for government goods and services and government's production decisions, as well as how these problems might be addressed using the tools of microeconomic analysis. Students will leave this course with a better understanding of how an economist approaches many contemporary policy debates and an ability to use microeconomic analysis to assess policy problems.

PPOL 804: Public Sector Organization Theory

3 Credits

Public policies are more often than not designed by public sector organizations and implemented by them. To understand public policy, then, students must understand public sector organizations. Why

are they designed as they are? And why do they behave as they do? Several disciplines offer often competing theories to answer these questions. This course will survey these theories to provide students with a foundation for understanding public sector organizations and how they influence public policy. After first discussing the inherent link between public sector organizations and public policy and discussing how public and private sector organizations differ, this survey will examine several theories that address the internal structure of organizations: bureaucratic, structural, human relations, contingency, and new institutional theories. Behavioral decision theory and incremental theory are then examined as the most prominent views on how organizations make decisions. External influences on organizational structure and behavior are then considered in a review of organization ecology, resource dependency, and organization economics theories. The course will then move beyond isolated organizations by addressing social capital and network theory and social movement theory. In reviewing these several theoretical perspectives, special attention will be placed on public sector organizations and the application of insights from the theories to the design and implementation of public policy. The goals of the course include developing an understanding how the different theories offer critical insights for the design and implementation of public policies

PPOL 805: Bureaucracy and the Policy Process

3 Credits

This course examines the role of bureaucracy in the public policy process. Bureaucracies are critical actors in the conceptualization of policy problems, formulating policy solutions, and implementing public policies, whether directly through government or via the market. Public agencies are also the locus of many public policy careers. We will analyze how public agencies and their employees at all levels of government survive and sometimes prosper within an intensely political environment. The course briefly examines the relationship between politics and policy as first developed in public administration as the politics/administration dichotomy, then via the concept of overhead democracy within political science, and finally in contemporary economics and political science via public choice theory and principal agent models. Second, to better understand this transition in approaches to understanding of bureaucracy, the course develops a working model of bureaucratic politics by examining the motivations of relevant actors and their complex political environment(s). And third, this model is employed to examine the enduring problem of political control of the bureaucracy, with emphasis on evaluating a number of alternative and competing institutional strategies designed to enhance control. This first of these strategies is via hierarchy as expressed via principal-agent analysis. After outlining the logic of agency theory, the course looks closely at the relationship between bureaucracy and political executives, legislators, courts, and non-governmental actors. This strategy of controlling bureaucracy in the policy process is then contrasted with three others: limited government, non-bureaucratic provision of services by quasi-markets, and competitive bureaucracy in which agencies are designed to compete with each other. The goals of the course are to become first broadly familiar with the issue of bureaucratic politics and then how this influences each stage of the policy process. Beyond that, the goals include an appreciation of the nature of the bureaucratic control problem and the various strategies designed to address it.

Prerequisite: PPOL 801

PPOL 807: Managing Public Organizations

3 Credits

Public policies are more often than not designed by public sector organizations and implemented by them. To understand public policy, then, students must understand public sector organizations and the people who work in them, interact with them, or are served by them. All of these influence the substantive manner in which public policy is actually implemented and the quality of that implementation. Further, many public policy analysts move into line management positions as their careers develop. How well public sector organizations are managed, then, has a significant impact on public policy outcomes and policy analyst careers. This course considers a range of management issues operative in the daily work of public sector organizations. After first discussing the inherent link between public sector organizations and public policy and discussing how public and private sector organizations differ in regard to management, this discussion considers several broad characteristics that distinguish organizations. This includes organizational structures and cultures. It then addresses the roles of leadership and strategic planning in defining the management function. And last, the course surveys a broad range of persistent management issues with a bearing on public policy: managing the civil service system, motivating employees, organizational performance, contracts and networks, and citizen involvement. More dynamically, it examines the management of conflict, change and innovation, and the political environment. The goals of the course include developing both an understanding of the internal and external influences on public sector organizations as they implement public policies and an appreciation of the range of distinct management issues that influence policy outcomes.

Prerequisite: PPOL 804

PPOL 808: Public Finance and Budgeting

3 Credits

This course provides an overview of taxation and expenditure choices made by government as essential inputs into the policy process. How big should government be? What is a good source of revenue? What is a good expenditure? The course examines and compares how different theoretical and disciplinary approaches to fiscal analysis – economics, political science, and public administration – answer these questions. In addition to examining the question of the overall size and growth of the public sector and the governmental institutions responsible for fiscal choices, public expenditures will be evaluated from the perspectives of public goods theory (market failure and non market failure), rational budgeting theory and the development of budget proposals, incremental theory, and democratic theory. Revenue choices will be examined through the lens of both normative tax theory on the criteria of adequacy, stability, efficiency, and equity, and positive theories of taxation that address how taxes are actually adopted and altered by governments. An understanding of tax incidence is central to several of these criteria. The course will also examine the balance of government revenues and expenditures by examining the sources, financing, and consequences of government debt and the use of capital budgets. The course will be especially attentive to how policy professionals apply these varied theoretical approaches to answering these questions. The goal of the course is to enable students to become conversant both with the many conceptual languages in which government taxation and budgeting issues are debated and to prepare them for professional positions in which revenue and expenditures are essential instruments in the formulation and implementation of public policy.

Prerequisite: PPOL 802, PPOL 801

PPOL 809: Public Policy Analysis

3 Credits

This course provides students an overview of prospective public policy analysis as a means of informing public policy choice. That is, it examines how analysis techniques can be used to assess whether proposed policy solution are likely to solve policy problems. The scientific logic underlying formal prospective public policy analysis is discussed before turning to identifying policy problems, conceptualizing public policies from economic, organizational, and political perspectives, and identifying public policy alternatives as well as the criteria for assessing their likely policy consequences and political and organizational feasibility. Several formal methods of prospective public policy analysis are discussed, including a family of back-of-the-envelope techniques, forecasting methods, simulation methods, discounting for probability, risk, and time, cost-benefit analysis, and political and organizational analysis addressing feasibility. Such formal analyses are not, of course, the only type of information used in the policy formulation and adoption process. Thus, the limits on the role of formal analysis in the policy process are discussed along with the effective reporting of formal prospective public policy analyses.

Prerequisite: PPOL 503, PPOL 506

PPOL 810: Policy and Program Evaluation

3 Credits

This course provides students an overview of public policy and program evaluation as a scientifically-based means of assessing whether such programs and policies are effective after they have been adopted and implemented. The scientific logic underlying evaluation research is discussed before turning to conceptualizing public policies and programs as testable hypotheses. After then reviewing measurement theory and its application to public policies and programs, the course discusses the inferential validity criteria used to assess a variety of research designs. A major portion of the course will entail an in-depth discussion of several different research designs, including their logic, implementation, strengths, and weaknesses. These will include discussions of pre-experimental, experimental, correlational, interrupted time series, regression discontinuity, comparison group, case study, and nested research designs. Ethical and other practical problems of constructing evaluation research in the field are examined. Finally, the reporting of evaluation research results along with utilization problems associated with evaluation reports are discussed. The goals of the course include enabling students to both critically interpret evaluation research reports and to design, conduct, and report evaluation studies of public policies and programs.

Prerequisite: PPOL 803, PPOL 806

PPOL 811: Project Design and Methods

3 Credits

The capstone project is the culminating course in the Master of Public Policy (M.P.P.) program, in which students demonstrate their ability to design and execute a significant public policy analysis project in their area of public policy specialization. Successful completion of the project is a final demonstration that students can perform the professional work of public policy analysts. Capstone projects will likely be a prospective analysis of a policy proposal or a retrospective

program or policy evaluation. Indeed, students may build on the policy analysis research proposals they developed in earlier courses. Students are strongly encouraged to do one or the other of these two types of projects, although other types of analysis projects may be submitted for approval to the M.P.P. program. This course will take students through the conceptualization, measurement, analysis, and reporting stages of their projects.

Prerequisite: PPOL 809, PPOL 810 CONCURRENTS: PPOL 894

PPOL 894: Capstone Experience

1-18 Credits/Maximum of 18

Supervised, professionally oriented student activities that constitute the culminating experience in the program.

CONCURRENT: PPOL 811

PPOL 895: Public Policy Internship

1-18 Credits/Maximum of 18

Supervised, professionally oriented, off-campus, non group instruction, including field experiences, practicums, or internships. Written and oral critique of activity required.

PPOL 897: Special Topics

1-9 Credits/Maximum of 9

Formal courses given on a topical or special interest subject with a professional orientation that may be offered infrequently; several different topics may be taught in one year or semester.